

tical light. "It is nearly four o'clock," she added, glancing at her watch, "and I promised to accompany Mrs. Locke to the Church bazaar, so I must get ready at once." And she rose, leaving Ethel to her own thoughts.

Poor Ethel! Forget what had passed between her mother and herself she could not, and at varying intervals the distracted cries: "What shall I do? Oh, what can I do?" broke from her lips, as her mind wavered between her loyalty to, and love for, Jack, and the desire to help and please her parents. Ethel was thinking hard. Each possible solution that presented itself was eagerly and minutely examined, only to be finally cast aside as either useless or impracticable. Thus an hour must have passed since Mrs. Carsby went out when Ethel was suddenly startled from her meditation by the sharp knock on the front door that signalized the arrival of the postman. She hurried to receive two letters, one for her father and one, in bold handwriting, addressed to herself. It was from Jack, and she carried it to her room before she opened it.

It ran:

— Canyon, Alberta.

"Dear Ethel.—I have just returned from a three days' ride among the foothills to the west of here, the Governor having asked me to see whether or no there were prospects of opening another mission in that direction. I did not find many people in there, as the country is very broken but I tell you little girl, I had one of the most delightful rides in my experience. The scenery, in places, was simply magnificent in its solemnity, and grandeur, and more than once, as I brought my broncho to a halt, I found that I had unconsciously removed my hat, so awful and solemn was the silence.

My house is finished now, and looks very attractive indeed. It is nicely situated; nestling, as it does, among the trees that skirt the river, with its front windows looking away to the west over the broken foot hills until the gaze is arrested where the hazy blue of the distant Rockies shades off into the blue of the sky. I am gradually getting it furnished, but I cannot help thinking how barren indeed it must be in spite of all that I do to make it homelike, until you, dear Ethel, consent to come and grace it with your presence.

I no longer hesitate to urge upon you to hasten the day of our marriage; for the country is being rapidly settled with a good class of people, so that you need not fear being lonely here. I need your love and companionship to inspire me in my work, and I am sure that, with your parents' consent, we should be very happy in this little home in the West.

"God grant that the way may be speedily paved for our union is the heartfelt prayer of one who is privileged to sign himself

Yours, in respect and love,
Jack."

Ethel read the letter through twice, and, as the bitter irony of her position came home to her, she was shaken with passionate sobbing. Why had she promised to go out to him? She had no right to. She could not leave her parents, come what may, she could not leave them now. She must answer Jack on this point at once and not keep him lingering in suspense. And with this in view, Ethel went to the table and commenced the letter that would inform him of the utter impossibility of their marriage for some time to come—if ever. Yes, it was better to hint here what she felt he must learn, sooner or later: that there was the possibility of the transference of her affections to another. It would have to be delicately put. "I must break it as delicately as possible," thought Ethel, and with this in view she found herself using a great deal of ingenuity and much more notepaper than was her custom. But now it was tea-time—she would finish the letter afterwards.

During tea Ethel was entirely engrossed with her thoughts. She was thinking out newer and better ways of conveying the information that she felt she must convey to Jack with the least possible laceration of his feelings. She felt a sense of elation at her ingenuity. It would be put in such a way that Jack

would scarcely realize that all was over between them until he grew not to care. True there was the painful thought that Jack was not the only one who must suffer, but she did not care for herself. Her father had, that day, had more than usual ill success at business and did not notice his daughter's preoccupation. Mrs. Carsby noticed it, but, thinking that she knew the reason, judged it better to offer no comment, and the meal was finished in silence.

After tea, Ethel soon betook herself to her room and finished the letter to her own satisfaction. She was quite pleased as she read it over. It was a literary triumph, she thought. She had always been a good letter writer, but had never before been called upon to execute such a masterpiece. She was gathering the pages together to place them in an envelope when, as she lifted the last page her eye fell on an advertisement in pronounced type in the columns of the Toronto paper which she had placed beneath her writing paper to act as a pad.

It read:

Short Stories and Poems Wanted.

Authors! send your M.S.S. to the — Publishing Co., where they will receive prompt and careful consideration.

The words fascinated Ethel. Why should she not write stories? She felt sure that she could. She knew not the philosophy that "need creates," and fell to wondering why she had not thought of doing something before. "If I could earn enough to help papa," she muttered reflectively, "I should not have to marry Finch." The idea took shape and grew. She would purchase the necessary material when she went out to post her letter—the purpose of which was, for the time being, quite forgotten.

It was nearly four o'clock the next morning before Ethel dragged her weary limbs to the bedside and undressed. She had finished her first story. It was a brief portraiture of her own sad heart's experiences. She had found no difficulty in writing, once she had determined upon her theme. As the thoughts came she expressed them, and the plot unfolded event by event, as fast as the eager fingers could guide the willing pen. Ethel was too tired to read it over once she had finished the story, so the review and correction were left till morning. She had crawled into bed ere she remembered that she had forgotten her nightly prayers, but as she sank into slumber the words of Browning's "Pippa" seemed to wander with reassuring sweetness through her tired brain:

"All service ranks the same with God:
... each only as God wills
Can work

... there is no first nor last."

Jack Chadwick was cantering leisurely across country to the post office. He was expecting a letter from Ethel, and, as he rode, he was wondering what Ethel's reply would be. He was a natural man with all the natural longings for simple joys of true home life. He fell to thinking how different everything would be when Ethel came out; for, although he loved his work, his home life was very lonely to him out there, and by the time he had reached the post office he had completed an extravagant dream-picture of the rides and rambles they would have amongst the alluring scenery of the adjacent foot-hills. Yes, there was a letter for him and it was from Ethel. It seemed to be rather a long one judging from its bulk. "Ethel is not in the habit of writing such a long letter as this," he said to himself, "she must have a great deal to say. I guess I'll canter out to the creek before I open it."

A couple of miles brought him to the secluded spot he sought. He dismounted and threw the rein over the pommel of the saddle, allowing his pony to graze, then, stretching himself on the grass, he proceeded to read the letter. Almost the first lines he read caused his brows to pucker, and, as he read on, the frown continued to deepen until, as the full significance dawned upon him, his pent feelings found expression in a hoarse, angry cry, as of a wounded moose brought to bay by the hunter. He crushed the letter in his hand and turned a frozen gaze to the un pitying sky, as



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